

# **Montana's Upland Game Bird Programs**

## **Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement**

Landowners can reap the rewards of a cost-sharing program when they improve their land and make it more inviting for Montana's upland game birds.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks can work directly with landowners - and other individuals, groups and organizations - to improve private and public lands for Montana's native sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse, and mountain grouse, as well as the state's adopted game birds - ring-necked pheasants, Hungarian Partridge, and wild turkeys.

Landowners can apply to enroll in the updated cost-share program to develop, enhance, and conserve Montana's upland game bird habitats if the land in the project area remains open to reasonable public hunting. Up to 75 percent of the cost of the Landowner's Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement project can be reimbursed.

### **Need help determining if your land can be enhanced for upland game birds?**

Projects eligible for funding under the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program should comprise at least 100 contiguous acres of land, with some exceptions. Your FWP wildlife biologist will help you determine if your land can be improved to offer upland game birds better:

- Winter cover
- Food plots
- Nesting cover
- Shelterbelts
- Habitat components, including range management, conservation easements - and wetland restoration, for the benefit of upland game bird populations.

### **Wondering how to get all this done?**

After you and FWP agree on how and where improvements can be made, your FWP wildlife biologists will:

- Help you prepare management plans.
- Lend a hand in your efforts to establish suitable nesting cover, winter cover, or feeding areas through cost-sharing leases, or conservation easements.

For more information and an on-line application form visit FWP's website at [fwp.state.mt.us](http://fwp.state.mt.us) - or call your nearest FWP office.

Hunting preserves, lands that host a commercial hunting enterprise, and lands where hunting rights are leased or paid for are not eligible.

## **Upland Game Bird Release Programs**

### **Ring-necked Pheasant Releases**

In 2001, Montana's Legislature revamped the state's Upland Game Bird Release Program. The program can reimburse landowners for raising and releasing pheasants in unoccupied, yet healthy and potentially productive habitats.

The intent of the program is to establish new pheasant populations for public hunting.

Individual landowners can apply for enrollment in the program by contacting the closest FWP office (see map).

Projects on private and public land - submitted in partnership with youth organizations, 4-H clubs, sports groups, or other associations that can guarantee the completion of all project requirements - also are eligible.

### **Need help determining if your land or project is a good fit?**

Projects eligible for funding under the Upland Game Bird Release Program must comprise at least 160 contiguous acres of land and contain a combination of winter cover, food, nesting cover, and other upland game bird habitat components needed to establish viable upland game bird populations.

To determine if your land or project is a good fit, your FWP wildlife biologists will:

- Assess your upland game bird release site.
- Help you prepare management plans.
- Lend a hand in your efforts to establish suitable nesting cover, winter cover, or feeding areas through cost-sharing leases or conservation easements.
- Determine the number of pheasants that can be supported on the project area.

### **Reimbursement requirements for releasing pheasants**

- Birds must be at least 10 weeks old at time of release.
- Birds must be fully feathered and beginning to resemble adult birds in size and markings.
- At least 40 percent of the released birds must be roosters.
- Bird banding may be required to determine release effectiveness.
- FWP must be on hand at time of release to verify and sign reimbursement forms.
- Reimbursements will be based on the average market cost of birds raised by certified hatcheries or game bird growers in Montana.
- Releases are limited to five consecutive years.
- Application for releases must be made by May 15 and releases done between August 1 and September 15.

For more information and an on-line application form visit FWP's website at [fwp.state.mt.us](http://fwp.state.mt.us); or call your nearest FWP office.

Hunting preserves, lands that host a commercial hunting enterprise, and lands where hunting rights are leased or paid for are not eligible. To help determine the success of this program Fergus, Richland and Roosevelt counties are not eligible. These counties will serve as "control" counties where wildlife biologists will monitor pheasant populations and compare them to counties where pheasants have been released.

### **Wild Turkey Releases**

In 2001, Montana's Legislature revised and added a new component to the state's Upland Game Bird Release Program. The new program funds releases of wild, free-ranging birds trapped in Montana or wild turkeys brought into the state by FWP.

#### **Want to establish wild turkeys in your area?**

Each new release proposal must first undergo an environmental assessment and be approved by the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission. To determine if your proposal is a good fit, and if suitable wild turkey habitat exists, your FWP wildlife biologists will:

- Determine if the habitat - in both quality and area - is suitable for wild turkeys.
- Determine the history of previous wild turkey releases, if any.
- Determine if supplementing an existing wild turkey population is desirable.
- Help applicants develop agreements with adjacent landowners and obtain consent for free public hunting.

Hunting preserves, lands that host a commercial hunting enterprise, and lands where hunting rights are leased or paid for are not eligible.

For more information, and an on-line application form, visit FWP's website at [fwp.state.mt.us](http://fwp.state.mt.us) - or call your nearest FWP office.